

## OUR VIEW: Action on energy: Needed now!

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What does our very blue governor, Dannel P. Malloy, have in common with the very red Maine Gov. Paul LePage? Both are looking for solutions for the region's "special energy challenges," as Malloy put it.

Or as LePage said, "If you look at the 12 highest energy states in the country (in terms of prices), all New England states are part of the 12."

The issue is capacity, they agree. As coal-fired power plants shut down, more utilities are turning to natural gas to generate electricity — but natural gas, at least for now, has to be imported from other parts of the country.

Some see the answer as investment in gas pipelines to carry the fuel to electrical suppliers; others oppose the idea, citing environmental and safety concerns.

But economic issues may also play a role.

According to The Connecticut Mirror, "Winning approval for new pipelines outside existing rights of way is politically difficult, and oil dealers in Connecticut have organized against financing pipeline construction through electric rates."

Moreover, Malloy notes, "The market may not be driving a solution because it's walking away with an extra \$7.5 billion" — the amount the New England states paid in higher costs over the last two years.

Despite the opposition, many believe the issue must be addressed — and soon.

Connecticut Consumer Counsel Elin Swanson-Katz said, "A capacity deficiency is not a scare tactic. Taken to an extreme, that means rolling blackouts. We need more energy options."

And she raised another issue, referring to the "very human cost" of the region's high energy prices.

"We've heard from proud people who never missed a payment in their life and have done a great job with their finances who nevertheless have to ask for help with their energy bills," she said.

We pointed out her concerns yesterday as we appealed to readers to support Operation Fuel. At the time, we blamed the increased need on the harsh winter we've just endured (and the warm-up that has been so elusive). Now, it's evident that market forces also played a role in the higher prices.

So we applaud the governors for recognizing the problem. Sixteen months ago, all six New England states signed an agreement committing them in principle to expanding gas and electric transmission

lines and putting aside political differences to work on it. But, like Gov. Malloy, we can't help but be a little impatient with the process.

After all, if Swanson-Katz is right, a solution can't come soon enough.